

SUBJECT: Former Prisoners of War Recognition Day

COMMITTEE: State Affairs: favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes--Laney, Guerrero, Tallas, Cain, Gibson,  
Harrison, Hilbert, Hury, Jones, Oakley, Saunders

0 nays

2 absent--Perez, T. Smith

WITNESSES: For--Samuel Bier, American Ex-Prisoners of War

Against--None

DIGEST: HB 404 would permanently designate April 9 as "Former Prisoners of War Recognition Day," to be regularly observed with appropriate ceremonies. It would not be a legal holiday.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Those members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have suffered, and often died, in captivity in prisoner-of-war camps while serving their country deserve a day permanently designated for recognition of their valor and sacrifice. Of the more than 78,000 surviving POWs in the United States, at least 3,500 reside in Texas. The day would be commemorative only; it would not be another legal holiday.

Five other states -- Alabama, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma -- have enacted similar laws permanently designating a POW Recognition Day. Congress has designated a national POW Day, but only by resolution, which must be reapproved each year. Those veterans missing in action are remembered on a specially designated day in September; April 9 would be set aside to honor those former prisoners who have been accounted for.

April 9 is a particularly appropriate date to commemorate former P.O.W.s because it is the anniversary of the 1942 capture by the invading Japanese of U.S. and Filipino forces defending the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines during World War II. The prisoners were forced on a "death march" on which thousands died.

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OPPONENTS  
SAY:

No apparent opposition

NOTES:

SB 119 by Edwards, the companion bill to HB 404, passed the Senate by 31-0 on Feb. 13 and has been referred to the House State Affairs Committee.